

California Department of Transportation

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Governor's Office of Planning & Research



May 25 2021

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STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

Ms. Bailey Hunter
Chicken Ranch Rancheria
Me-Wuk Indians of California
P.O. Box 1159
Jamestown, CA 95327

TUO-49-PM 12.132
Chicken Ranch Casino-Hotel
of the Chicken Rancheria
Me Wuk Indians
Draft Tribal EIR
SCH# 2021010299

Dear Ms. Hunter,

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the Draft Tribal Environmental Impact Report (TEIR) for the Chicken Ranch Casino and Hotel of the Chicken Rancheria Me Wuk Indians of California. The proposed project will include approximately 900 slot machines and 12-14 table games, two attached 900 – 970 space four-story parking structures, and an attached hotel. The proposed project will replace the existing Chicken Ranch Casino, which will be shut down and converted to other uses once the proposed project begins operations. The proposed project will be directly visible and accessible from State Route (SR) 49/108, which is held in trust by the federal government. The project will be located adjacent to SR 49/108 in Jamestown, CA. Access to the project facility will be at Mackey Ranch Road and SR 49/108.

The following comments are based on Caltrans review of the Draft Tribal EIR:

Highway Operations:

- The project proponent must submit an application for an Encroachment Permit to the Caltrans District 10 Permit Office for any improvements that encroaches into Caltrans Right-of-Way (ROW), including the current Caltrans Capital Project EA 10-1K720, TUO-49/108 and Mackey Road intersection improvements to install a single-lane roundabout. Please consult with Charlie Do, Caltrans Project Manager, for further assistance with this Caltrans project.
- Section 3.13.3 Environmental Consequences on page 3-79 states the Proposed Project would cause an increase in off-Reservation traffic, which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system. The proposed project would increase traffic in the area during both construction and operation. Please ensure mitigations are monitored.

- Table 10, page 3-81 Intersection LOS Scenario Comparison – SR 108/49 and Chicken Ranch Road intersection is expected to remain at acceptable LOS during the AM peak hour, however it operates at an unacceptable LOS during the PM peak hour in 2040 conditions. With the construction of the roundabout at Mackey Ranch Road, the delay at the intersection is still at an unacceptable LOS, however the delay is greatly reduced.
- Please work with Caltrans ROW, design and project engineer oversight for the development of the SR 49/108 roundabout including lighting and appropriate line of sight distance for posted speed with appropriate signage to area destinations namely the Jamestown Hotel and Chicken Rancheria Casino and Hotel.

Travel Forecasting and Modeling:

- The description under Table 10 does not match what is shown on the table Page 3-81 (108/715). Is the Level of Service (LOS) incorrectly shown on table?
- Please address why Year 2040 was used for forecasting and operational analysis on Page 3-81 (108/715). Shouldn't this be 20-years out from the Hotel and Casino opening day?
- Appendix H, Traffic Impact Analysis: When were the field counts conducted? What travel demand model was used? Can you please provide that data to Caltrans for review?
- Appendix I, VMT Analysis page 1 of 15 (694/715): On paragraph 4, it specifies a 4-story hotel and 3-story casino which is inconsistent with TEIR as it states a 9-story hotel and casino.
- Appendix I, VMT Analysis page 6 of 15 (699/715): According to paragraph 2 of 4.1.2, it states 'the project would hire a majority of its employees locally' however Table 2 shows average trip length of 43.2 miles which is higher than customers average trip length of 39.4 miles.
- Appendix I, VMT Analysis pages 8-9 of 15 (701-702/715), Table 5 shows rerouting of existing regional gaming customer trips shows -13,609 VMT. Is this correct? The rerouted customers still have to drive to the project. Are these new VMT trips accounted for? Caltrans assumes this would cancel each other out at best. Also, will the proposed Hotel and Casino offer live shows or music venues that would attract additional new trips to the project?
- Appendix I, VMT Analysis Page 14 of 15 (707/715): Table 12, showing a -3345 VMT reduction is assuming that all buses will be at 100% capacity for all trips, but that is probably not the case in reality. A better assumption would be to use the average percentage capacity of the existing bus program.

Hydrology:

- The developer needs to ensure that the existing State drainage facilities will not be significantly impacted by the project.

- Peak run-off flows may not be increased from the pre-construction quantity and the site runoff is to be treated to meet present storm water quality standards.
- Grading of this project should not redirect run-off flows or significantly impact the existing drainage patterns.
- Please submit the Hotel and Casino drainage plans and run-off calculations for Caltrans review when they become available.
- Please ensure that the development runoff is captured and is a standalone conveyance system not tied into Caltrans SR 49/108 conveyance and culvert drainage network. This includes potential wastewater impacts, pollutants, hazardous material runoff, settling ponds, and prevention of upstream drainage to Caltrans facilities.

Lead Agency:

As the Lead Agency, the Chicken Ranch Rancheria of Me Wuk Indians of California is responsible for all project mitigation, including any needed improvements to the State Transportation Network (STN). The project's financing, scheduling, implementation responsibilities and monitoring should be fully discussed for all proposed mitigation measures, prior to the submittal of an encroachment permit.

- Transportation Mitigation could include enhancements to the intersection at Chicken Ranch Road & SR 49/108 squaring off the road to 90 degrees.
- In addition, there appears to be an opportunity on Chicken Ranch Road to work with area stakeholders in widening and creating a Class 1 or Class 2 bicycle & pedestrian facility back to the Woods Crossing residential area, this mitigation could eventually connect Jamestown to Chicken Ranch with a future bicycle and pedestrian path.

Encroachment Permit:

If any project construction activities encroach into Caltrans ROW, the project proponent must submit an application for an Encroachment Permit to the Caltrans District 10 Permit Office. Appropriate environmental studies must be submitted with this application. These studies will include an analysis of potential impacts to any cultural sites, biological resources, hazardous waste locations, and/or other resources within Caltrans ROW at the project site(s). Please include California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documentation with supporting technical studies when submitting the Encroachment Permit. For more information please visit the Caltrans Website at:

<https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/ep/applications>

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If you have any questions or would like to discuss these comments, please contact Michael Casas at (209) 986-9830 (email: Michael.Casas@dot.ca.gov) or me at (209) 483-7234 (email: Gregoria.Ponce@dot.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

Gregoria Ponce'

Gregoria Ponce, Chief
Office of Rural Planning

c: State Clearinghouse
Quincy Yaley, Director, Tuolumne County Planning Department
Kim MacFarlane, Director, Tuolumne County Public Works Department